



2007 Farm Bill Forum

Name:

Jim DAVIS

Address:

1195 Rd 1 NE

City:

Coulee City

State:

WA

Zip:

99115

Phone:

509-632-5529

Email Address:

JLDVS@TELEVAR.COM

SEE ATTACHED



Washington Farmers Union

1195 Road 1 NE • Coulee City, WA 99115
Phone: 509-632-5529 • Fax: 509-632-8747
e-mail: Jldvs@televar.com

FARM BILL FORUM

Eastern Washington University

Comments submitted by Jim Davis, President Washington Farmers Union (11-3-05)

The future of the Conservation Reserve Program must recognize the success of the past twenty years in providing a foundation of economic and environmental benefits that farmers and non-farmers have strongly supported in Washington State.

Many Washington family farmers have realized through their participation in the CRP that good stewardship pays. Not just in terms of the rental values in their contracts or the health of their soils or the viability of wildlife populations. CRP has been the financial tool that has allowed family farmers to make a positive contribution to the health of rural communities. There is overwhelming support for CRP contract extension in my own county from farmers and businesses.

The State of Washington enjoys a symbiotic relationship with the Columbia and Snake Rivers that provide hydro-power, irrigation, recreation, transportation, flood control and habit for wildlife. The PNW continues to grapple with the consequences of Endangered Species Act protection for salmonid species that depend on these same river systems that Washington family farmers depend on for their livelihood. The CRP is a Federal Farm Program component that provides benefits to all the citizens of the PNW because it helps farmers reduce soil erosion in order to protect critical habitat for ESA listed salmon.

My own county, Douglas County, is bordered by the Columbia River on three sides so I am well acquainted with salmon protection issues. My county is also home to three other endangered species that are candidate species for ESA protection, the Pygmy Rabbit, Western Sage Grouse, and Sharp-tail Grouse. Douglas County has a 33% enrollment in the CRP most of which has been enrolled from the inception of CRP with passage of the 1985 Farm Bill. Douglas County is developing a Habit Conservation Plan (HCP), a Section #10 provision of the Endangered Species Act, that will provide farmers and ranchers a voluntary opportunity to commit their land to the stakeholder designed protections of an HCP that will protect them from third party lawsuit allowable under the ESA. The CRP in Douglas County provides the critical habitat necessary for the protection of species that could be harmed by the fence-to-fence farming provisions of the 2002 Farm Bill. The HCP/CRP in Douglas County is a template for the use of existing federal law and local control self-determination that can be used to protect family farmers, endangered species and local economies.

My recommendation is that where the ESA impacts farming activities that can be mitigated by CRP enrollment that EBI values reflect more fully the benefits of CRP. In the case where there are listed and candidate species in a county that can be protected by collaborative efforts such as HCP's where the CRP is a key component, that additional EBI points be granted and the 25% cap waiver be retained in order to minimize CRP contract acre reductions. Contracts, longer than the short extensions that are characterized in the CRP re-enrollment and extension announcement, of up to 15 years would provide the most likelihood of ensuring that ESA candidate species meet de-listing requirements which the goal of the ESA. Farmers are on the front-line of the ESA battle and CRP is our weapon of choice.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE
SECRETARIAT, USDA

2005 NOV 10 P 12:18

2005 NOV 10 P 12:18

2005 NOV 10 P 12:18

2005 NOV 10 P 12:18

2005 NOV 10 P 12:18

2005 NOV 10 P 12:18

2005 NOV 10 P 12:18

2005 NOV 10 P 12:18

2005 NOV 10 P 12:18